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ITEM 4 (a):* GENERAL POLICY ISSUES

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR 1991

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Note by the Executive Director

Summary

The present note contains in very abbreviated form a description of the contents of the five chapters of the Annual Report of the Executive Director 1991: (i) The Year in Retrospect; (ii) The Coordinating and Catalytic Role of UNEP; (iii) The Environment Programme; (iv) Intergovernmental Legislation of Relevance to UNEP; and (v) Financial and Administrative Matters. Additionally, the report contains five annexes: (i) List of member states; (ii) Distribution of UNEP staff in the Professional Category and Above by Region, Nationality and Level as at 31 December 1991; (iii) Trust Funds and other Funds; (iv) Environment Fund Tables; and (v) Implementation of UNEP Programme 1990-1991.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council, recalling its decision 16/5, paragraph 1 on the rationalization of Governing Council documentation, may wish to take note of the Executive Summary of the 1991 Annual Report of the Executive Director.

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* Refers to the number of the item on the Provisional Agenda (UNEP/GC.17/1).

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1991 ANNUAL REPORT OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In its decision 16/5 (para.1), on the rationalization of Governing Council documentation, the Council requested the Executive Director, *inter alia*, to continue to issue his annual report on an annual basis and in all official languages, but not as an official document of the Council. A brief executive summary of the annual report should be submitted to the Council highlighting the policy issues involved and the proposed suggested action by the Council. The present report is submitted in compliance with that request.

2. The 1991 Annual Report of the Executive Director, following the pattern of previous Annual Reports, contains five chapters and several annexes.

Chapter I

3. In this chapter entitled "The Year in Retrospect", the Executive Director reviewed the events of 1991 from the perspective of UNEP. In characterizing 1991, the Executive Director called it "one of the most difficult, the most demanding, and yet one of the most exhilarating in UNEP's relatively short history". First and foremost was the formidable task of completing the implementation of the 1990-1991 biennial programme budget approved by the Council at its fifteenth session in 1989. But over and above this "regular" work were the additional responsibilities assumed by UNEP as its contribution to the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The preparation of a comprehensive report on the state of the environment during the two decades since Stockholm, the intense and complex negotiations for a global convention on biological diversity, UNEP's input into the drafting of an international convention on climate change, the preparations of a comprehensive report on the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, and the compilation of the Secretary-General's report on follow up to General Assembly resolutions 42/186 and 42/187 concerning the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond and the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. During the year, over $3 million of UNEP's budget were devoted *directly* to preparations for UNCED. Additionally many ongoing UNEP activities dovetailed with areas of specific concern to UNCED.

4. Early in 1991, following the outbreak of hostilities resulting from the Iraq/Kuwait conflict, reports of horrendous environmental damage in the region were filed by the media. UNEP immediately convened a United Nations inter-agency meeting which put together an environmental action plan. UNEP also established a special trust fund to finance some of the activities under the plan. Subsequently, in cooperation with the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME), UNEP prepared a consolidated rehabilitation plan for the region.

5. Together with the World Bank and UNDP, UNEP in 1991 launched the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as a pilot operation. Intensive preparatory work was also carried out for the establishment in early 1992, on an experimental basis, of a United Nations Centre for Urgent Environmental Assistance. Another initiative undertaken during the year was an exploration of the establishment by UNEP in cooperation with the Government of Japan, of an international environmental technology centre. If all goes well, the centre - which is to be an integral part of UNEP - will be set up in 1992.

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6. In short, 1991 was a year of ambitious undertakings and intensive preparations, a year that for UNEP ended with feelings of pride, hope and anticipation of promising results and new challenges.

Chapter II

7. The coordinating and catalytic role of UNEP in 1991 is described in chapter II. The first section, dealing with coordination within the United Nations system, starts with the meetings of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) at which environmental concerns were expressed,[1] then goes on to describe the activities of the Designated Officials for Environmental Matters (DOEM). UNEP's involvement in 1991 with other organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, particularly regarding preparations for UNCED, is detailed in section I of this chapter.

8. The next section of the chapter is devoted to environmental coordination and catalyzation in the various regions, focussing especially on the work of UNEP's regional offices. Subsequently, reports are provided on the work of other coordinating and catalyzing mechanisms - the Committee of International Development Institutions on the Environment (CIDIE) and the UNEP Clearing-house and the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Finally, a special section is devoted to UNEP's work in 1991 with women's groups.

Chapter III

9. The third chapter, comprising the bulk of the report, contains a report on the activities carried out by UNEP's Office of the Environment Programme in 1991 under 13 specific headings: atmosphere; water; terrestrial ecosystems; oceans and coastal areas; lithosphere; human settlements and the environment; human health and welfare; energy, industry and transportation; peace, security and the environment; environmental assessment; monitoring and assessment; environmental management measures; and environmental awareness. The information in this chapter provides the reader with a good cross-sectional view of what the Office of the Environment Programme undertook and accomplished in 1991. The major activities (highlighted in chapter I) - negotiations for a global convention on biological diversity, the preparations of a comprehensive state-of-the-environment report covering the twenty years since Stockholm, etc. - are described in more detail in this chapter, together with the regular activities required to implement UNEP's 1990-1991 programme budget.

Chapter IV

10. The subject of intergovernmental legislation of relevance to UNEP is handled in chapter IV, with special focus on the 47 decisions adopted by UNEP's Governing Council at its sixteenth session in May 1991. The 47 decisions fall under three general categories: (i) general policy; (ii) programme matters; and (iii) financial and administrative matters. Of interest is the fact that 17 of the Council's decisions touched on the preparations for the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, witness to the keen interest of the Council in UNCED.

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[1] The report of the ACC is being submitted to the Council in document UNEP/GC.17/11.

11. The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), at its second regular session in 1991 adopted a number of procedural decisions, taking note of various reports emanating from UNEP (including that of the Governing Council's sixteenth session) and transmitting them to the General Assembly. It also adopted a resolution (1991/1997) calling for a study on aridity, soil erosion, salinity, water-logging, desertification and the effects of drought in South Asia.

12. The General Assembly, at its forty-sixth session in the fall of 1991, adopted 11 resolutions and 5 decisions on the subject of the environment - a clear indication that the General Assembly regards environment as a prime consideration in the political, economic and social spheres of its work.

13. The jist of all environmental decisions and resolutions adopted in 1991 by the Governing Council, ECOSOC and the General Assembly is given in abbreviated form in chapter IV.

Chapter V

14. The last chapter of the report deals with financial and administrative affairs. In the first section ("Financial matters") information about income and expenditure are given, broken down into the four sources, of UNEP's resources - the Environment Fund, Trust funds, counterpart contributions, and the regular budget. In all four categories, 1991 was a record year, with a total income from the four sources of approximately $89.5 million - as compared to $78 million in 1990, $57 million in 1989 and $48 million in 1988. Such an increase, at a time of global financial recession, is forceful testimony to the increasing importance Governments are attaching to environmental concerns.

15. Section II of the chapter is entitled "Personnel matters" and contains a report on the staffing situation at UNEP in 1991. As at 31 December 1991, UNEP had a total of 691 staff members on board, 525 of whom were working at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, with the balance (166) working in UNEP's regional and outposted offices. Of the 691 staff, 252 were Professional and 439 General Service.

16. The last section of the chapter concerns the first phase of a study of the management and organization of UNEP which was being carried out by an internationally recognized consultancy firm, a study requested by the Governing Council in its decision 16/6. The second phase of the study was to be carried out after UNCED and subsequently to be taken up by the Governing Council at its seventeenth session in 1993.[2]

Annexes

17. The 1991 Annual Report of the Executive Director contains five annexes. The first lists the 58 member States of the UNEP Governing Council in 1991. The second shows the distribution of UNEP staff in the Professional and higher category by region, nationality and level, as at 31 December 1991.

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[2] A report on the second phase of the study is being submitted to the Council in document UNEP/GC.17/6/Add.2.

18. Annex III, subdivided into two parts, contains detailed accounts of Trust Funds and other Funds, describing their status and actions taken by UNEP in 1991 as well as their financial status as at 31 December 1991. Annex IV contains a series of detailed tables on the Environment Fund, showing *inter alia*, contributions (1988 to 1991) apportionments, allocations, commitments (1992-1993) and expenditures in 1990-1991.

19. Lastly, Annex V contains an account of the implementation of UNEP's biennial programme for 1990-1991 showing which projects were being implemented against each programme element or sub-element.